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ABSTRACT

This document suggests methods and materials for introducing students in junior and senior high school social studies courses to African culture and history. The document is presented in five parts. Part I proposes objectives for studying about Africa, including that Africa is an important part of the world, provides insight into other cultures, helps students learn about themselves, and provides a good example of a region which exhibits both traditional and modern characteristics. Part II suggests 14 criteria for evaluating teaching materials on Africa, including readability, timeliness, non-stereotypic nature, representation of the diversity of African culture, and reliance on African sources. Part III recounts how the novel "Roots" by Alex Haley can be used as a resource for connecting Africa with black studies. Part IV suggests traditional and modern African literary and poetic works which can serve as a basis for study of African colonialism, nationalism, history, and civilization. The final part explains how a film produced by the United Nations, "Fear Women", can help students understand the status of women in Ghana. Suggested readings, audio-visual aids, and activities are suggested throughout. (DB)

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TEACHING ABOUT/LEARNING FROM: AFRICA.

A Series.

AFRICAN STUDIES PROGRAM

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Teaching about

AFRICA

Learning from

CONTENTS

Objectives for Teaching and Learning about Africa in American Schools

Criteria for Evaluating Teaching Materials on Africa

Using Roots in your Pre-Collegiate Curriculum

African Literature in your Classroom

Using a Film to Teach about Women in Africa

teaching about AFRICA
learning from

OBJECTIVES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING ABOUT AFRICA IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS

A brief survey of goals and objectives found in learning materials about Africa gives us a variety of responses to the question: Why should we study Africa?

It's There

One of the easiest answers to this question is that we study Africa because it's there; it is a part of the world. We are curious about the world around us, and Africa is a big part of that world. This response, however, is so general that it is useless when we ask the question, "What should we teach?"

We Learn About Ourselves

Another common reason for teaching about another culture is to lead the students to learn about themselves. This can be a very important by-product of studying of other cultures. Frequently, however, the materials are presented in such a way that a student says, "I'm glad I don't live there." If a book shows a picture of a mud hut with a thatch roof, or a school with wooden benches, a dirt floor, and few amenities, the American student will react with a sense of how much better off he or she is compared to the children in the African house or school. This is not the kind of learning about oneself that leads to an appreciation of another culture.

The diversity of African peoples, life styles, houses, schools, geography, history, government, art and music and culture can be related to the diversity of American life. This can lead to an appreciation of the richness, depth, and complexity of human societies. Some generalities may be made as well, about humankind's need for food, shelter, clothing, health care, education, and social organization, and that all nations are becoming increasingly interdependent when it comes to having these needs.

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We are Related to Africa

We should study about Africa because we are closely related to Africa. This topic has several facets. Most obvious is the legacy America gained from Africa in terms of human population. African-Americans are descendants of Africans, whether they made their way to this country from the West Indies, Europe or Africa itself. The ancestors of African-Americans came to this country earlier than those of most white Americans, who streamed into America in the nineteenth century. Native Americans, of course, pre-date everyone else. The recent emphasis in our schools on multi-ethnic studies makes it important that we study Africa as a part of the Black experience.

Secondly, we should study about Africa because European and American cultures have been profoundly influenced by African culture through the arts. More important, however, is the influence Africa has had on Western society through trade. Even though the United States was not a colonial power in Africa, we benefitted from the colonial system whereby people, products and minerals from Africa were used to build and maintain our economy.

We are related through our mutual memberships in world organizations, such as the United Nations. Studying about Africa can improve our understanding of how African nations act in international affairs.

There are many other examples of ways in which we are related, but the above are among the most important.

We Are Interested in Other People and Countries

Many published materials on Africa stress the need for us to learn about other peoples and cultures. Sometimes this objective has been exploited in such a way that the learner strengthens his or her stereotypes about Africa. Exotic people are presented. So-called "Pygmies," "Hottentots," "Bushmen," or even the Masai, Dogon, Nuer, or Zulu are depicted in old "National Geographic-type" ways. Their unusualness, their strangeness, their unique customs (some of which are repugnant to Westerners) are emphasized. This approach does not lead us to understand their social and political situation, but to wonder at their exotic ways.

Sometimes, the objectives of learning about African countries seem to be limited to studying the wildlife. Again, a stereotype is reinforced: "Africa is full of wild animals." Surely publishers and authors should know that people are more important than animals. Kenya and Tanzania, for example, are far more important because of their history, culture, and economic systems than because of their game parks. Succumbing to teaching about African wildlife because the students are enthralled by it, is a rationalization which reinforces the media stereotype. If animals must be discussed, a brief reference to conservation and tourism can suffice as reasons why wildlife preserves are important to African countries.

What We Do Affects People in Africa

This reason for studying about Africa is not widely understood. Most people think that Africa is "over there," not related to us nor we to it. But this is certainly not the case. Decisions made by corporations controlled by American business people and stockholders have profound effects on African people and countries. Many African countries have no say in determining the price of the raw materials which they produce: the price is usually fixed by the economically more powerful industrial nations in America and elsewhere. For instance, in the middle sixties, the price of cocoa was so low that Ghana which depends on that commodity for most of its foreign earnings could not make enough money to pay for sufficient quantities of its essential imports. The popular dissatisfaction arising from this state of affairs was an important factor in the overthrow, bythe military, of Ghana s first president, Kwame Nkr mah. The process can be made to work the other way, too: we all know what happened in America when the oil producers of the Middle East imposed an embargo on the export of oil to the United States. The more the nations of the world understand each other's problems the better we can avoid hurting each other in this way.

We Have Much to Learn From Africa

Some teaching materials on Africa stress how Africa is learning from the West, particularly how technological improvements are being made in farming, medicine, industry, etc. This idea is frequently termed "progress" or "becoming modern" (meaning that Africa is becoming like us). This is a clear example of cultural imperialism, sense of superiority, and even racism. Certainly, technology can and does benefit many people, but we always stop there. We never ask "What can we learn from Africa?" The assumption is that there is nothing to learn.

When studying Africa, whether in kindergarten or in grade twelve, we can teach certain African ideas which would enrich us all. It is important for Americans to learn that African societies have much to teach us in terms of human relationships and concepts of the family. The most common example is the concept of the extended family, found in many African cultures. This pattern of social relationships relates generations, binds families and assures a respected and secure place for the elderly.

We could learn too, why many African peoples choose African socialism as a form of economic and political structures which attempt to assure the most good for the greates number of people. This is frequently misunderstood in the West and many authors convey the idea that African nations should develop social and economic structures like our own.

World Justice and Peace Depend on Our Understanding Our Neighbors

The most basic concept of all, and the most important objective in studying Africa is the hope for world justice, peace, and brotherhood. This cannot be achieved without knowledge and understanding of other peoples. This broad, underlying idea directs all of our learning and teaching, keeping us critical and open, well-informed, and committed to our profession.

Understanding and living with other nations and other peoples is more than a romantic goal--it is a necessity for survival in our interdependent world.

THESE OBJECTIVES WERE FIRST COMPILED BY
MARYLEE WILEY WITH ASTAIR ZEKIROS IN 1975
AND EDITED IN 1978 BY KOFI MENSAH.

SOME OTHER TITLES AVAILABLE FROM THE AFRICAN STUDIES PROGRAM, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON:

- AFRICA IN SOCIAL STUDIES TEXTBOOKS by Astair Zekiros and Marylee Wiley, 1978. This study of fourteen common problems in teaching about Africa is available for $2.00 from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 126 Langdon Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53702. (Ask for Bulletin No. 9550)

-TEACHING ABOUT AND LEARNING FROM AFRICA: Criteria for Evaluating Teaching Materials on Africa. (one copy free).

-A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR TEACHERS AND GRADES K-12, May, 1978, by Astair Zekiros. (one copy free)

-CHILDREN'S BOOKS ON AFRICA, May 1978, by Astair Zekiros. A suggested list of books to retain and a suggested list of books to discard, primarily for librarians. (one copy free)

-USING ROOTS IN YOUR PRE-COLLEGIATE CURRICULUM, November, 1978, by Kofi Mensah. Suggestions and bibliography for integrating the teaching of Africa and the African-American Experience. (one copy free)

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CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING TEACHING MATERIALS ON AFRICA

A study completed in 1968 by Barry Beyer and E. Perry Hicks, testing the cognitive and affective understanding of American seventh and twelfth grade students regarding African studies provided a very gloomy picture. More students held negative stereotypes about African peoples, cultures, history and physical environment at the twelfth grade level than at the seventh. Even well-prepared teachers with adequate teaching materials cannot overcome widely and strongly held negative stereotypes about Africa, stereotypes which emerge again and again in the press, television, movies, comic books, etc. It is difficult to correct these ethno-centric and uninformed judgements which are expressed almost daily in the media.

The Beyer and Hicks test results also indicate a lack of high quality teaching materials and a lack of adequate teacher training in African studies. Our experience in the past several years of visiting schools leads us to believe that the findings of Hicks and Beyer remain generally valid. There are ourstanding exceptions where African studies are taught by exceptional teachers seeking up-to-date and relevant ideas, methods, and materials.

Attempts are being made now to produce quality materials about Africa. Some publishing houses are upgrading their material. Various organizations and institutions are evaluating and recommending materials which lead to new understandings and appreciation of African culture, past and present.

The growing concern for education in global issues is resulting in the development of stimulating and provocative studies and classroom materials in global education. However, the gap between producing these new materials and having them used in classrooms remains large.

What we seek is a general understanding of Africa on its own terms, recognizing its cultural uniqueness and its common humanity. Students come to African studies with preconceived notions of what Africa and Africans are. These notions mean that we begin our teaching, not from

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a point zero, as in foreign language, science, or math, but below zero. We begin with students who hold negative attitudes. One of the primary criteria for judging teaching objectives and materials is the extent to which these objectives and materials correct the stereotypes and opinions held by students.

1. Are the materials readable and suitable for the class?

2. Is the content accurate and up-to-date?

3. Does the material lead the reader to understand the diversity of the climatic and physical features of Africa? Are the common stereotypes that all Africa is jungle and desert defeated? If Africa is studied under a "hot and wet lands" unit, does other material balance this? Does the student learn that Africa has snow-capped mountains, temperate highlands and vast grassland savannahs?

4. Does the beginning student learn that Africa is a continent, not a country? Frequently, Africa is studied in a sequence including China, India, Japan, and Mexico. Africa is a continent and is not parallel to country studies. Choosing one or more African nations as particular case studies would help to remedy this problem.

5. Does the material lead the reader to understand the diversity of contemporary African peoples? Does it therefore avoid easy generalizations, such as, "All tribes have chiefs" or "Africans love to dance?" Does the material avoid the common pitfall of emphasizing the exotic, such as the so-called "Bushmen" or "Pygmies?" Are urban dwellers included in the material along with nomads, fishermen, and farmers? Are the diversities within these groups of people acknowledged? Are the varied social, economic, and political institutions discussed within the continent, region, or country? Are urban areas studied to overcome the common stereotype that all African people are poor rural farmers and to illustrate the importance of urban areas as centers of political and economic power?

6. Are political and economic differences presented with openness? Do discussions of one-party states include material in defense of the one-party system as well as criticism of it? Are socialist governments examined with candor and balance? Are military governments studied in the historical context through which they came to power? Or are these topics presented and jugded against a belief that the basic American two-party political system and free enterprise economic system are the best for everyone everywhere at all times? Is the text biased by interpreting African politics in light of the East/West or the Soviet/U.S. power struggle? Or are diverse African positions explained, including those of the non-aligned, neutral nations which take different positions on different issues if and when it is in their self-interest? Is the question of communism in Africa given honest appraisal? Or does the material reflect the very common assumption that African nations are puppets manipulated by the Soviets? Is Western imperialism examined as critically as Soviet imperialism? Are the terms "imperialism," "communism," "non-aligned," etc. defined and used carefully?

7. Are issues of interdependence raised both within Africa and globally?

Are the roles of other governments, private corporations, and international agencies (Organization of African Unity, United Nations, World Bank, Pan-Africanist movements, etc.) included in discussions of political, economic, and cultural issues? Can the student find discussion of the problems of economic dependence on single commodities, of foreign control of markets, of problems of access to technology and capital? Is the diaspora of black people around the world and especially in North America presented as an example of African cultural heritage and interdependence?

8. Is history presented beginning with ancient times rather than with the arrival of the white explorer in Africa? Does the material avoid such ethno-centric statements as "Livingstone discovered Victoria Falls," which reveals a biased white and Western interpretation of history? Is the colonial period described from this bias or are African points of view included?

9. Is there an artificial separation of Sub-Saharan Africa from North Africa, or are the important cultural diversities and continuities presented as part of the complexity of the whole continent? If the material is about Sub-Saharan Africa, what place do Saharan countries and countries of the Horn of Africa have? If one is attempting a general overview of Africa, or if one is choosing specific country studies, North Africa should be included with the rest of Africa. Although North African countries are closely related to the Middle East through religion and culture, they are part of the continent of Africa. Some historians no longer consider the Sahara Desert a barrier, but rather a crossroads, linking the peoples of the north to those living in the Sahara and south of it. For centuries these linkages have been important means of trade, both in goods and in ideas. Islam is not unique to North Africa, but extends throughout West Africa and into Eastern and Central Africa to a lesser extent.

10. Is the complex and rich musical and artistic heritage of Africa presented as a valuable part of life? Are urban and contemporary musical and artistic expressions studied? Are diverse artistic and musical forms studied? Or is there a limited emphasis on drums and masks or statuary?

    Students are interested in learning that jazz has it roots in African music and that African young people are frequently as enthusiastic about contemporary and rock music as young people here are. American students are usually surprised to hear about electric guitars in African bands. Likewise, the influence of African art on European and American art (Picasso, Romare Beardon, Klee, etc.) as well as the reverse (Msangi, Gebre Kristos Desta) are important ways to illustrate the idea of cultural interdependence.

11. Are African authors and sources used? Is African literature included in the curriculum to communicate specific African points of view about societies, belief systems and historical or current events? Are primary sourses such as diaries, treaties, transcripts of oral narratives and histories from Africa used to give a diverse range of opinion on a topic?

12. Are the value judgements of the author exposed and examined? Does the

material avoid words with strong negative connotations such as "tribal," "primitive," "uncivilized," "witch doctor"? When "under-developed" is used, it is clear that this is in reference to industrial teachnology, not to structures of human relations? Are students urged to identify value-laden terminology? To examine the author's values? To examine their own values? Are differences treated with respect rather than deprecation or condescension?

13. Are African peoples and African cultures the central theme of the material rather than events of outsiders such as explorers, missionaries, business people, etc? Many books fall into the trap of studying about Africa through the eyes of Westerners who wrote about their experiences there. African events should be the focus of study about Africa. Outsiders' experiences can be interesting, but they should not dominate the material.

14. Does the material lead the reader to appreciate differences, to understand commonalities, and to evaluate and adapt his or her views of human society in such a way that will lead to a just and peaceful world? Do the students come to understand that we have much to learn from African peoples as well as much to give? Is a notion of respect and reverence for human life, young and old, rich and poor communicated beyond the tedious statistics of gross national product, ratio of persons to cars, literacy rates, etc? Is there a sense of valuing human life and relationships without all the material comforts found in industrialized societies?

THESE CRITERIA WERE FIRST DRAWN UP BY MARYLEE WILEY AND ASTAIR ZEKIROS IN MADISON IN 1976, AND EDITED BY ASTAIR ZEKIROS IN APRIL, 1978.

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USING ROOTS IN YOUR PRE-COLLEGIATE CURRICULUM

In view of the current emphasis on multi-ethnic studies in our schools, one meaningful way of introducing Africa in the school curriculum is to see that continent as the original home of the 25 million black people of the United States and therefore as an integral part of the Black Experience. This approach is most appropriate in schools where there is a large number of black students who, increasingly now, are demanding to be taught their heritage, but it can also be used in predominantly white schools where indifference towards Africa leads to the perpetuation of stereotypes about the continent.

Alex Haley's novel, Roots, provides an excellent resource for connecting Africa and Black America in this way, since its major theme is precisely that of the painful Americanization of the African, Kunta Kinte. As a novel, it is representative of the era of black self-assertion and shares in that desire among blacks to define themselves in their own terms. This feeling has spurred a wide interest in Africa that was not there a couple of decades ago. Indeed, only some twenty years ago, the Afro-American on the whole tended to view Africa in terms of the same denigrating stereotypes that prevailed in America generally. In recent years, the reverse is the case: not only does the Afro-American tend to accept Africa, he usually holds an idealized conception of the continent.

Haley's novel is a profound expression of this identification of Afro-Americans with Africa as the "mother continent." It comes at a period when, at the popular level, more and more Afro-Americans are adopting African names, while at the scholarly level, more and more black scholars are conducting research and writing on Africa. It is itself the result of considerable research into the history and culture of the Mandinka people of West Africa. Yet, it is also a very American novel in the way it affirms in the end that the black person can find a place in America if he perseveres.

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The Africa section of the novel provides a lively resource for teaching about various aspects of Africa. Three topics are especially featured: the question of domestic slavery in Africa, the ancient kingdoms of the Western Sudan, the organization of village communities in pre-colonial Africa. The novel, however, is massive and is for that and other reasons not suited in its entirety for teaching at the pre-collegiate level. The Wolper Productions teaching kits for elementary and high schools derived from the popular TV adaptation of the novel are therefore an indispensable component of a Roots-based curriculum.

Both the TV production and the kits based on it tend to overglamorize Africa, omitting the crucial issue of domestic slavery in Africa (which Haley wants expressly to discuss), while inserting cute irrelevancies like the romantic encounter between Kunta Kinte and Fanta. The picture of Africa presented is a little too idyllic. It is almost as if in the effort to compensate for the old stereotypes of Africa as the jungle teeming with drum-pounding savages, the producers swing to the opposite extreme in which Africa is a paradise without social conflict until the Europeans came to spoil it all. Obviously then, a course which centers on the Wolper Productions kits needs to be supplemented in various ways. The following is a list of materials which can be used to complement the kit.

A. SLAVERY AS AN AFRICAN INSTITUTION

Materials for the Teacher

Meltzer, Milton. Slavery. New York: Dell, 1974.

Ch. 26, "Africa Before the Europeans" is a concise account of the institution of slavery in African society.

Bohannan, Paul. Africa and Africans. Garden City, N.Y.: The Natural History Press, 1964

Chapter 7 contains a brief but useful account of the position of slaves in African communities.

For the Class

Haley, Alex. Roots. New York: Doubleday, 1976.

Chapter 16. This brief chapter of only 9 pages is devoted to discussing the question: What is a slave? Haley's portrait of the slave in African society is intended to contrast with slavery as it was practised in America. It is not a difficult chapter and can be understood by high school students.

For the Class (cont.)

Rich, Evelyn Jones and Immanuel Wallerstein. Africa: Tradition and Change. New York: Random House, 1972.

Chapter 7 contains a useful overview of slavery in Africa and includes a reading on the subject from R. S. Rattray's Ashanti Law and Constitution. Possibly the best reading on the subject for high school.

B. PRE-COLONIAL AFRICAN SOCIETY

Wolper Productions Kit, Themestrip.

This filmstrip has been specially extrapolated from the whole and is entitled "The Boyhood of Kunta Kinte." It is a very good introduction to such questions as: growing up in old Africa, the lifestyle of rural Africans, family relations. Its obvious drawback is in its assumption of an unchanging Africa.

Haley, Alex, Roots, Chapters 1-33.

Though somewhat romanticized, Haley's fictionalized account of life in a West African village in the eighteenth century is good. Especially noteworthy are, 1) the presence of Islam, 2) the institution of slavery, 3) the autonomy of the village community even though it is aware of itself as part of a larger ethnic group, the Mandinka. This is an aspect of traditional African social organization which is often overlooked in preference for the ancient empires and kingdoms, 4) growing up in a traditional African community.

Laye, Camara. The Dark Child. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1954.

The original French version, l'enfant noir, would also make good reading in French for high school. In this sensitive novel, a West African writing from Paris, reminisces on his disappearing way of life. The chapters (7 and 8) on the initiation ceremony give a vivid impression of the mystery and terror of the event, contrasting with Haley's more festive approach. Good for high school.

Achebe, Chinua. Things Fall Apart. Fawcett World Library, 1958.

Portrays the impact of the colonial presence on a traditional West African community. An important value of this novel lies in its showing that there were already tensions in the traditional society which made it vulnerable to the Europeans.

Achebe, Chinua. Arrow of God. Doubleday, 1964.

Excellent novel protraying the tensions in a pre-colonial Ibo (Eastern Nigerian) society. An inside view of a traditional community that governed itself without kings. High school.

Gatheru, Mugo. Child of Two Worlds. Heinemann.

The early sections are on the subject of growing up; this time in Kenya. High school.

For the Teacher

Davidson, Basil. The African Genius. Little, Brown and Co., 1964.

Excellent text for understanding traditional African social organization.

Apoko, Anna, "Growing Up in Acholi," East African Childhood. ed. Lorene K. Fox.

This account of growing up in Uganda explains concepts like clan and the extended family in the context of a changing nation.

C. ANCIENT AFRICAN KINGDOMS

For the Teacher

Davidson, Basil. The Lost Cities of Africa. Little, Brown and Co. 1959.

A scholarly introduction to the ancient civilizations of Africa and still one of the best books on the subject.

Shinnie, Margaret. Ancient African Kingdoms. Mentor, 1965.

A readable study of ancient civilizations of Africa.

For the Student

Haley, Alex. Roots. Chapters 20 and 24.

In these chapters, Haley gives an account of the ancient empires of the Western Sudan as well as the trans-Saharan trade, but his account, coming from a Mandinka griot or oral historian, is slanted in favor of the Malinke empire of Mali. High school students could be assigned these chapters.

For the Student (cont.)

Brooks, Lester. Great Civilizations of Ancient Africa. New York: Four Winds, 1971.

Polemical in its thrust, this book discusses ancient African achievement with a view to debunking the myth that blacks are inferior. High school.

Dobler, Lavinia and William A. Brown. Great Rulers of the African Past. Doubleday, 1965.

Lively biographies of the leaders of five empires of West and Central Africa in pre-colonial times. Middle school.

Boahen, A. Adu. Topics in West African History. Longman, 1966.

Concise readable account of ancient African kingdoms as well as the rise of modern African nationalism. High school.

Chu, Daniel and Elliot Skinner. A Glorious Age in Africa. Doubleday, 1965.

Good middle school text on the ancient kingdoms of the Western Sudan.

Joseph, Joan. Black African Empires. Franklin Watts, 1974.

A good elementary school text for teaching about the empires of ancient Africa.

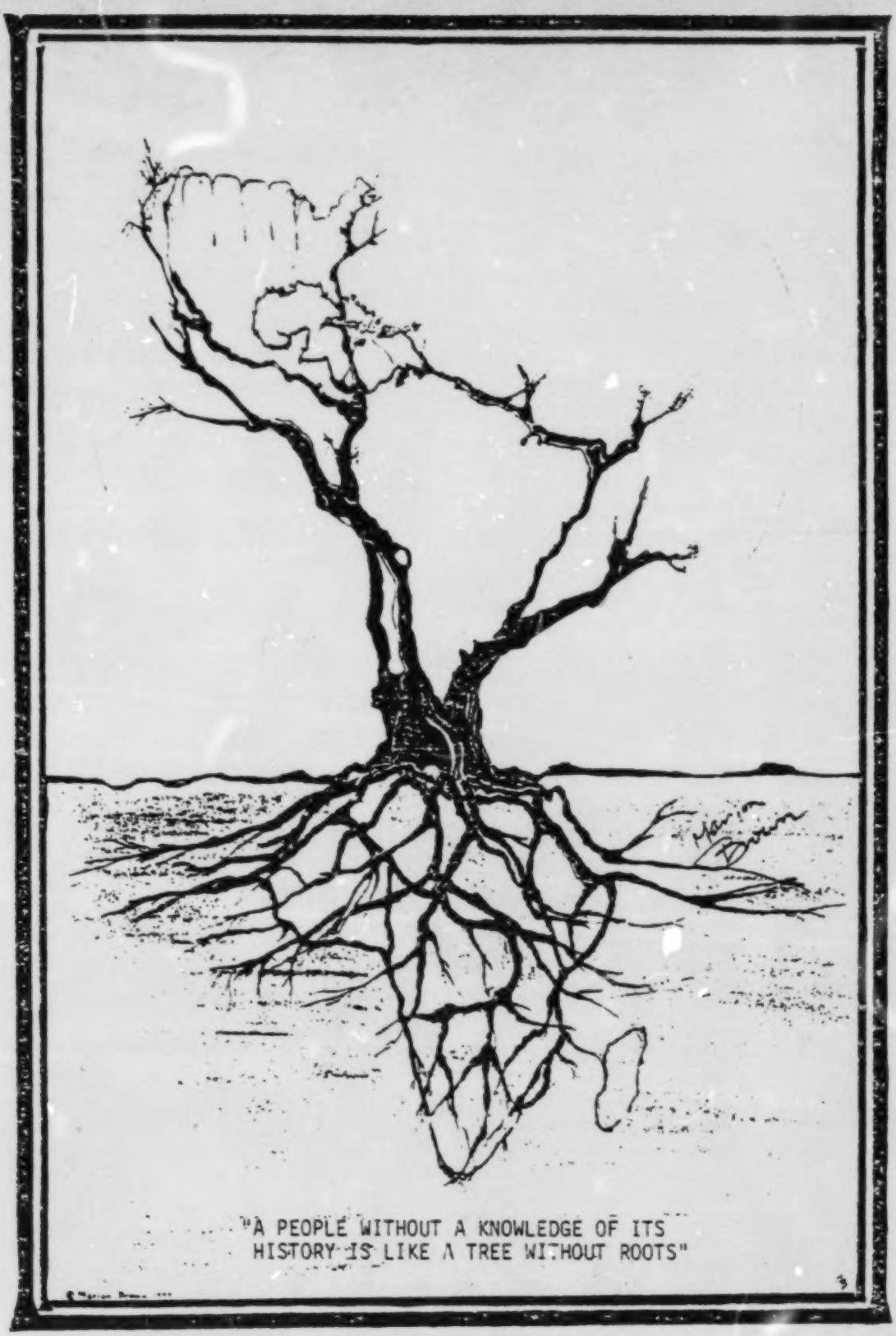
Bertol, Roland. The Epic of the Lion King. New York: Crowell, 1970.

A presentation in the mode of the oral epic of the story of the legendary king of Mali. Delightful text for the elementary level.

Supplementary Material

Ancient Africans: 27 minute film in color about the old African empires and states.

Prepared by Kofi Mensah
November, 1978



This poster in its original 15" x 22" format is available. from the artist who created it in 1976. Send a personal check to Ms. Marion Brown, 236 Home Economics Building, University of Wisconsin 53706; $3.50 each.

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AFRICAN LITERATURE IN YOUR CLASSROOM

Perhaps the most intimate approach to Africa is through its literature, both traditional and modern. The traditional literature was largely oral and unwritten and comprised folktales, riddles, proverbs and poetry of various types such as eulogies, dirges, heroic (historical) poems and love lyrics. A good deal of this has been translated and published and can be studied in that rather second-hand manner. (See for instance, Ruth Finnegan. Oral Literature in Africa. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1970.)

Though some of the modern literature of Africa is in African languages, most of it is written in one of the five European languages bequeathed as a colonial heritage and is more directly accessible and more pertinent to an understanding of contemporary Africa. The bulk of it has flowered since the forties and the reason for this is not hard to understand. Despite claims to the contrary, the colonial administrators did not provide education on the kind of scale that would make a mass production and consumption of written literature possible. Indeed, it was not till after independence that widespread modern education was introduced in most of Africa. Therefore, even though literary endeavors were often made by literate Africans--for instance, Olaudah Equiano, taken into slavery from Nigeria but later freed and educated, published an account of his travels in 1789--there just were not enough educated people.

The great upsurge in written African literature coincided with the rise of African nationalism and is part of that upheaval among the peoples of the continent which culminated in the wresting of independence from Europe. For our purpose, therefore, the literature of modern Africa can be conveniently classified in terms of the way in which it reflects social and historical developments on the continent from about 1940 to the present.

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I. Reaffirming the African Past

A. Negritude

In the 1930s a group of blacks from the colonies studying in Paris where they felt most keenly the haughty posture which France adopted towards its colonized peoples--namely that French culture was the only true human culture into which the less civilized peoples of the world ought to be assimilated--got together and started a literary movement which later came to be known as Negritude. Even though two (Aime Cesaire and Leon Damas) of its three original founders were from the French Caribbean, Negritude's most prolific theoretician and practitioner was the West African, Leopold Senghor, who has been President of Senegal since its independence in 1960. What the movement sought to do was to restore to the colonized black peoples of the world pride in their ancestral heritage. Pursuing this end, it tended to display three common characteristics: 1) it is often quite virulent in its rejection of European things, and often this rejection is extended to the white race generally. In an essay entitled "Black Orpheus," Jean-Paul Sartre referred to this feature as "anti-racist racism". 2) Negritude literature often contains glorious celebrations of the African past as well as loud affirmations of Africa's special humanism. 3) Often, it expresses itself in revolutionary terms, since after all, it was part of a struggle against oppression. The following extracts give an idea of the flavor and diversity of Negritude writing:

a) New York! I say to you: New York, let black blood flow
into your blood
That it may rub the rust from your steel joints, like an
oil of life,
That it may give to your bridges the bend of buttocks and
the suppleness of creepers.
Now return the most ancient times, the unity recovered,
the reconciliation of the Lion, the Bull and the Tree;
Thought linked to act, ear to heart, sign to sense.
(Senghor, "New York")

b) Brother--teeth flashing in the cant of compliments,
Brother--gold rimmed glasses
Across eyes that go blue at a a word from the Master,
Poor brother in your silk-lined tuxedo
Chattering and whispering and swaggering through con-
descending drawing rooms,
We pity you.
(David Diop, "Sell-Out")

c) With her three fingers red with blood
With dog's blood
With bull's blood
With goat's blood
Mother touched me three times.
She touched my forehead with her thumb.
With her index my left breast
And my navel with her middle finger.
(Birago Diop, "Viaticum")

Negritude writers were mainly poets writing in French and while they have been published individually, the following anthology is very good for teaching these poets in their original language:

1. Lilyan Kesteloot, Anthologie negro-africaine. Verviers: Editions Gerard & Co., 1967.

Also, the Negritude poets are included in translation in most anthologies of African poetry. The selections from the work of Leopold Senghor, David Diop and Birago Diop in the two anthologies mentioned below will give high school students a fair idea of the movement:

2. Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier (eds.), Modern Poetry from Africa. London: Penguin, 1963.

3. James Miller, Robert O'Neal and Helen McDonnel (eds.), Black African Voices. Glenview: Scott Foresman & Co., 1970.

B. Other Writers on the African Past

Not all writers who have been concerned with the African past have been of the Negritude school--indeed, some have been outspoken critics of the movement, accusing it of uncritically glorifying the African past instead of examining it with honesty. Of the critics of Negritude, the most damaging has been the Nigerian critic, dramatist, poet and novelist, Wole Soyinka, whose famous remark that a "tiger does not proclaim its tigritude" is from one point of view the most unanswerable retort there is to the entire Negritude enterprise: people who are convinced of the value of their culture do not have to proclaim it. Usually, these other writers on the African past have been more critical of it than the Negritude writers even as they affirm the overall value of that past. It is a more real past that these writers present, indeed, a part which persists into the present. The following works illustrate this phase.

4. Wole Soyinka, The Lion and the Jewel. London: Oxford University Press, 1963.

> In this comedy which can be read in high school, tradition clashes with modernity with the victory going to the former. The playwright does not fail, however, to point to some of the weaknesses of tradition.

5. Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart. Fawcett World Library, 1958.

> A deceptively simple novel which portrays tensions between personal character, the demands of traditional mores and arrival of European conquerors. Excellent for high school.

6. Chinua Achebe, Arrow of God. Doubleday, 1964.

> Another novel portraying the organization as well as the tensions which existed in an Eastern Nigerian community, factions which made it an easy prey to the colonialists.

7. Camara Laye, The Dark Child. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1954.

A sensitive novel in which a West African reminisces on his disappearing way of life. The original French version, L'enfant noir, would make good reading in French for high school.

II. The Disruption Caused by Colonialism

In discussing colonialism in Africa, many American textbooks tend to emphasize its "benefits" while failing to discuss its less palatable aspects. Increasingly now, there are textbooks which try to correct this imbalance, but it is in literature that the most eloquent statement is to be found of what it means to have one's way of life so radically altered. The following texts address that subject.

8. Chinua Achebe, No Longer at Ease. Fawcett World Library, 1969.

The classic text on the subject. A highly readable novel about an educated African walking the tightrope between his own Westernized outlook and the restrictions and demands made on him by the traditions he no longer accepts. High school.

9. Cheikh Hamidou Kane, The Ambiguous Adventure. New York: Collier, 1969.

A very powerful novel about a youth caught between his belief in the traditional Islamic faith and the European culture he acquires while studying in Paris. Like Achebe, but even more powerfully, the author of this novel upholds and criticizes both old and new.

10. James Ngugi, The River Between. London: Heinemann, 1965.

Christianity and traditional religion are at the root of the separation of a young man from his fiancee. This novel seems to argue for a return to the older culture.

11. Okot p'Bitek, Song of Lawino. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966.

This long poem is in the manner of a traditional lament by a woman deploring the ways of her educated husband and proudly extolling her own traditional values. It is a hilarious book, but not suitable in its entirety for high school.

12. Ama Ata Aidoo, The Dilemma of a Ghost. London: Longmans, 1965.

A play about the difficulties facing a youth who returns to Ghana from studying in the United States with an Afro-American wife. Interesting also for dramatizing the cultural distance between Africans and Afro-Americans.

III. The Struggle Against Colonialism

In most places in Africa, people resisted the European domination, but in Kenya, the former Portuguese colonies and especially in Southern Africa the struggle has been intense. The literature produced around the subject is extensive and the few mentioned here are chosen on the basis of their suitability for the classroom.

13. James Ngugi, Weep Not Child. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967.

A moving novel about the emergency (or "Mau Mau") in Kenya when the Gikuyu people organized an armed resistance against the taking of their best land by the English settlers. Excellent for high school.

14. Alex La Guma. The Stone Country. London: Heinemann, 1967.

A novel about life in a prison in Apartheid-based South Africa. The hero, George, is there for organizing a political movement, but others are there for the crimes bred by the social and economic pressures of apartheid.

15. Ousmane Sembene, God's Bits of Wood. New York: Doubleday, 1971.

This novel is rather long for high school and is included for the teacher's own reading. It is a fictionalized account of a strike by railway workers in French West Africa in 1947-48.

IV. Independence and After

The period since independence has had more written about it than the other periods mentioned and the literature has generally become better and more diversified, with moods ranging from the witty and satirical, the profoundly despairing, to the militant and revolutionary. The best of this literature is too difficult for high school, but below is a selection of those texts that can be used in the classroom.

16. Chinua Achebe, A Man of the People. New York: Doubleday, 1967.

A novel about political corruption in a West African country. Good also for a flavor of the life in modern Africa.

17. Ousmane Sembene, Le Mandat et Vehi Ciosane.

    Le Mandat is a short novel in French about the bewildering bureaucracies that have come about in contemporary Africa as a result of the malfunctioning in the different setting of the red tape left behind by the Europeans. Also available in film.

18. Ayi Kwei Armah, The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born. New York: Collier, 1969.

    A powerful study of corruption, greed and decay in a modern African nation. Perhaps more suitable for the teacher than the class.

19. Wole Soyinka, The Interpreters. New York: Collier, 1970.

    A group of young intellectuals try to find a meaning for their lives in the destructive atmosphere of a bureaucratic, corrupt and superficial modern West African country. Again, too difficult for high school, but an excellent novel. Especially interesting for showing how traditional religion can still have relevance even for the most Westernized African.

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Madison, Wisconsin

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TEACHING ABOUT LEARNING FROM AFRICA

USING A FILM TO TEACH ABOUT WOMEN IN AFRICA

The film "Fear Woman" is a U.N. report on the status and roles of women in Ghana, made to coincide with the International Year of the Woman (1975). It contains interviews with three women: A Supreme Court judge, a business woman, and a traditional village chief; there is also a shorter interview with the headmistress of a secondary school. Though this gives a reasonably wide representation of elite women in Ghana, the film is definitely designed to tell a success story and does not adequately discuss the life of women in rural areas.

It is also a useful overview of modern Ghana, offering glimpses into such areas as education, occupation, politics and dress styles and is thus a very useful resource for fighting stereotypes about Africa. Below are a few ideas on how to use "Fear Woman" in the classroom.

1. The Traditional Status of Women in Ghana

The inscription "Fear woman to save your life" from which the film gets its title is a popular, perhaps even traditional, Ghanaian saying which illustrates one aspect of the woman's traditional status. She is accorded deep respect, indeed reverence, because as mother she is a life-giver favored by the deities; to offend a woman is to invite the hatred of the gods. In many parts of Ghana, the deepest insult one can pay somebody is to insult their mother.

Apart from the role of raising children which she shares with women everywhere, the Ghanaian woman has always been an active "bread-winner." In farming communities, she was responsible for cultivating most of the domestic crops for her family and would often also assist her husband in his work on the cash crops. Usually, she had the power to dispose of the surplus from her labor in any way she wished and was thus able to accumulate some capital. In some fishing communities, there was a more interesting division of labor: the men caught the fish which they sold in bulk to their womenfolk, who, operating an entirely separate business, would be the retailers. The women, therefore, could have their own property and were not financially dependent on the men. The powerful position of women in contemporary Ghana and some other West African countries as controllers of the retail business has its origin in this traditional division of labor.

Women, however, suffered discrimination in Ghanaian traditional societies, although there are instances in history when they rose to positions of leadership--a well known example in Ghana was Yaa Asantewa

who led the Ashanti army against the British in 1900. They were customarily kept out of active participation in decisions affecting the community and especially from leadership of the community. The prejudice was never so great as to prevent a woman's merit from being recognized and acclaimed where it was exceptional. Such an exceptional case was Nana Okosampah VI, the village chief interviewed in the film who probably won her right to the stool (throne) in fierce competition with other claimants, who were mostly men. We may presume that her example could have far-reaching consequences for the status of women in her community.

2. The Modern Situation

A good starting point for discussion is the classroom scene in the film. Some suggested topics are: the confidence of the girls; their feeling of total equality with the boys; indeed their conviction that they could coerce the young men into submission if necessary; but above all, the diversity of their career aspirations, which range from air stewardess to dentist. The contemporary Ghanaian woman is not only moving out of the farm and the home, she is doing things other than trading and is participating in all fields of endeavor including politics. It must be pointed out to the class that the idea of women in politically prominent positions--heads of state, cabinet ministers, ambassadors--is more startling to the poeple of the United States than to Africans. Mrs. Annie Jiagge, a judge of Ghana's Supreme Court, and Mrs. Esther Ocloo, a businesswoman, exemplify two different kinds of achievement possible for women in present day Ghana, as in traditional, pre-colonial Ghana.

Men have the advantage still, however, there have always been more of them in school, traditionally. The result is that they have dominated and continue to dominate the professions, the civil service and politics. But with the increased demand being made by Ghanaian women for an equal share in education, things may change.

3. Classroom Activities

a) A recent viewer of "Fear Woman" complained of culture shock: she was expecting Tarzan and did not find him, nor did she find Jane! The class could discuss what they have learned about Ghana from watching the film. In discussing dress styles, for example, how many people would notice that Ghanaian lawyers wear gowns and wigs to court, like British lawyers? Why is this so?

b) Discuss the position of women in Ghana mentioning how it is similar to or different from the position of women in the United States.

c) A student could be assigned to report on a famous woman in African history of whom there are quite a few. Examples are Hatshepsut of Egypt, Makeda (Queen of Sheba) of Ethiopia, Yaa

Asantewa of Ghana and Nzinga of Angola.

d) Students could present brief biographies of important women in present day Africa, paying attention to their social background. Louise Crane's Ms. Africa (Lippincott, 1973) would be a useful starting point.

This resource was prepared by Kofi Mensah, African Curriculum Consultant in February, 1979 with assistance from graduate students, Lois Adams and Glory Mamba.

NOTE: The film, FEAR WOMAN, is available at several audio-visual centers throughout the USA. The Bureau of Audio-Visual Instruction, University of Wisconsin-Madison (608/262-1644) has a copy available for $10.00 rental fee. The film is in color and lasts 27 minutes. The African Studies Program has a catalog of films about Africa for use in schools that may be borrowed from our Instruction Materials Center or bought for $2.00.

For other resources available from the African Studies Schools Outreach Program, write to us at 1454 Van Hise Hall, 1220 Linden Drive, Madison, Wisconsin, 53706 or call 608/262-2380.

For classroom visits, teachers' workshops and inservice programs, contact Henry Bucher, Curriculum Specialist at the same address and phone number. Our program serves Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Iowa.